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7-12-13 Minutes

Park and Recreation Commission
Minutes
Tuesday, July 23, 2013 @ 7:00 PM
Approved

The Park and Recreation Commission came to order at 7:00 PM in the second floor conference room of the Town Hall Annex on Tuesday, July 23, 2013.

Members in attendance included: Leslie Mayer, Shirley Canniff, Don Vitters, Jen Rothenberg and Jim Robillard. Also in attendance was Director of Recreation Joseph Connelly.

Members of the public included Roly Chaput, Dan Shine, Tony Vogel, Steve Biagiori, Jim Hunt, Elena Bartholomew, John Messurri, Matt Janger, David Cunningham, Matt Hanley, Richard Greco, Rob Diloroto, Melissa Dlugolecki, Richard Sweeney, Kareem Bouhafs~and others.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Canniff motioned to approve the minutes of July 9, 2013 as amended, seconded by Mr. Vitters and approved 5-0.

Open Forum – Public Comments

No public comments.

Friends of Robbins Farm Statue Proposal

Roly Chaput gave the Commission a brief history of the Robbins Farm dog statue that once stood in front of the Robbins Mansion. He believes it was taken by the demolition crew in 1952 when the mansion was demolished. The Friends of Robbins Farm would like to bring this dog back. After much research, they found several copies of the dog. The closest replica of the dog is at the Roger Williams Park in Rhode Island. The Houston Historical Society recast two statues based on their older dog statues.

The Friends would like to have a bronze copy made.

The cost of the statue will be roughly \$12,000 to \$15,000. The sculptor will turn the tail down for safety reasons. Mr. Chaput is looking for approval by the Commission to move forward. If approved, the Friends would like suggestions on where to place the statue. Some ideas of placement included on the cement overlook at the top of the hill, install it within the house foundation with a landscaped garden or in the back part of the playground near the newly installed picnic areas.

Ms. Mayer stated that it is a nice piece of art that connects the past to the future and is very appropriate to the location. The Commission encouraged Mr. Chaput to look at placing it outside the playground.

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to approve to support and move forward with the Friends coming back with more details on location; Mr. Vitters seconded and approved 5-0.

Arlington High School Request for Modification to Ice Schedule

A letter was received from Kathleen Bodie, Superintendent of Schools, requesting changes to the ice schedule for the 2013-2014 season. Dr. Bodie believes that some of the practice and game times are not “educationally sound”. Dr. Bodie was not present to discuss her concerns.

Rob Diloroto, who has served as interim Athletic Director, said he worked closely with Dr. Bodie over the past year meeting with her biweekly and could present the request. Mr. Diloroto reviewed the AHS request for additional ice time and schedule changes. Mr. Connelly stated that traditionally the ice schedule is made in April or early May for the upcoming season. Mr. Connelly and Mr. Cunningham met with the three major user groups, Arlington High School, Arlington Catholic and the Arlington Hockey Club,

at that time. The consensus was to keep the schedule the same as the last three years unless there is a specific conflict. The changes that are being requested by AHS now are serious and dramatic changes that will affect the other user groups and uses. Mr. Connelly presented the current schedule and reviewed how the proposed changes would affect each of the user groups. Ms. Mayer indicated that she had an issue with how the concept of “educationally sound” practice hours was being applied; stating that many other sports and school activities practice after 8 pm in the evening and prior to school during the week. She has concern that this request will be impacting other youth players, who are also students in our schools. The Commission discussed this point and would like the philosophy to be looked at system-wide and not just with respect to ice time. Mr. Shine, Arlington Catholic Athletic Director and Boys’ Hockey Coach, spoke about the impact of the changes and the positive working relationships that he has with each of the user groups to work out specific issues. Mr. Biogiori, Arlington Catholic Principal, reiterated Mr. Shine’s sentiments and expressed his sincere appreciation for the positive relationships that exist between the user groups.

Mr. Messurri, AHS Boys’ Hockey Coach, shared his concern that AHS doesn’t have enough ice time in Arlington, and the impact that traveling to rinks outside of Arlington has on his players. While Mr. Hanley, a parent, expressed frustration that Arlington High School was being asked to practice on non-town rinks while a private school with non-residents was skating at the in-town rink. Ms. Mayer pointed out that while the rink facility is within Arlington it was built as a regional resource and is run through an Enterprise Fund that supports the entire community and not just high school hockey.

Mr. Diloreto stated that hockey is the only sport that practices outside of Arlington and where the kids are responsible for getting themselves to and from practice. He stated that the school department was having counsel look at the liability issues with this practice.

Mr. Greco expressed concern that the AHS athletes did not have a day off from either going to school or hockey practice. Ms. Mayer and Ms. Rothenberg expressed their concern with reduced number of public skating and lesson hours offered at the rink. Ms. Mayer stated that the rink has already tweaked the schedule on a number of occasions to get hockey teams more hours of ice, at the expense of public skating.

As a way for the JV team to have more in town ice time, Mr. Shine suggested that the high school take their three hour blocks and have three separate teams on for 50 minutes compared to two teams getting 1.5 hours each. Mr. Connelly also offered the high schools the before school ice hours at a reduced rate.

Ms. Rothenberg asked Mr. Connelly for his recommendation. Mr. Connelly stated that he felt the current schedule was as fair as it could be for the three parties involved – with AHS still getting the greatest amount of ice time. AHS has 11+ hours of practice time during the week; AHC has 11 hours during the week; and ACHS 5 hours during the week. All teams have game ice hours, as well. Mr. Connelly asked the Commission if they wanted to make a motion to give AHS all of the hours and make the changes as requested. He stated if that was the Commission’s desire, he and Mr. Cunningham would modify the schedule. The Commission discussed the issue at length and did not want to make that recommendation. Mr. Robillard stated that although he had ties with AHS hockey through his son’s playing days he did not want to reduce ice time from the hockey club or Arlington Catholic.

Ms. Mayer stated that a solution to the issue that the Commission has explored is another sheet of ice. The Commission asked Mr. Connelly to revisit this opportunity. Mr. Shine indicated that he would like to be involved in the process. Ms. Mayer would like to see all users represented in the discussion.

Ms. Rothenberg motioned to not approve the request from Arlington Public Schools, seconded by Mr. Robillard and approved 5-0.

Capital Improvement Update

Florence Avenue Playground – The project is moving along. The Commission discussed the overall color scheme and all agreed to ask Ms. Batchelor to see if she can come up with something a little more artistic with the green and blue colors for the rubberized surface. The Commission would like to see the rubberized surface in the context of all of the play equipment colors.

Mr. Connelly will talk to an arborist to price trimming back the pine trees.

Buck Field Renovation – N/A

Capital Request for FY 2014 – ADA study requirements are being defined; Hibbert Playground and North Union Spray Pool are out to bid for design services.

Special Requests

Thorndike Food Awareness Field Day – Mr. Kareem Bouhafs is looking to have a Food Awareness Field Day at Thorndike Field on August 10, 2013. This event will target all ages and the goal is to raise community awareness about food. Mr. Bouhafs is looking to hold the event from 1:00 PM to 7:00 PM and would include a variety of games, booths, music and perhaps a bounce house. Insurance would need to be provided, waivers would need to be signed and a police detail depending on scope. The Commission expressed concern that scope is very large and that there isn’t a lot of information or time to review. Mr. Connelly and Ms. Rothenberg will work with Mr. Bouhafs on narrowing scope.

Rink and Recreation Update

No report.

Other Business

Field Permit Policy and future meeting schedule will be discussed at the August 20, 2013 meeting

Ms. Canniff motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Vitters and approved 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:
Joseph Connelly, Director of Recreation